

Tomenika's Text

I. K. Fedorova

Institute-Mae Ran, St. Petersburg, Russia

The author of this short paper had a difficult task: to analyse the glyphs and subject known as Tomenika's text, and then to read it--as much as is possible. It is a cursive text, made on paper in pen and ink. It was found in the village of Hanga Roa by the famous English scientist, Katherine Routledge (1919) during her expedition to Easter Island in 1914-15. She wrote: "We were shown one day in the village a piece of paper taken from a Chilean manuscript book, on which were somewhat roughly drawn a number of signs, some of them similar to those already known, others different from any we had seen. They were found to have been derived from an old man, known as Tomenika. He was the last acquainted with an inferior kind of *rongorongo*, known as the *tau*, but now he was ill and confined to the leper colony."

Routledge visited old Tomenika in the leper colony five times (he died some days after her final visit) and took photographs of some other writings made by the sick old man. But all of this, except some writing found occasionally in

"lazy" writing, based on information from inhabitants of the island.

Comparing Routledge's report and the genealogy of the descendents of an islander, Timotea Pate (Englert 1948), one could conclude that Tomenika was a Christian name well known to islanders as a learned man (*maori rongorongo*), Vaka Tuku Onge.

The preliminary graphic and semantic analyses of this remarkable text confirmed that its author not only studied the first elements of 'literacy' (like other island informants, for example Metoro, Ure Vae Iko) but was an expert in *kohau rongorongo*. His text is undoubtedly a piece of true hieroglyphic writing of Easter Island.

Scientists had little interest in Tomenika's text because it has non-standard signs in unusual positions--all of which caused difficulties in identification with the graphemes from the Barthel (1958) catalogue.

There are four lines in the text (Figure 1), including only

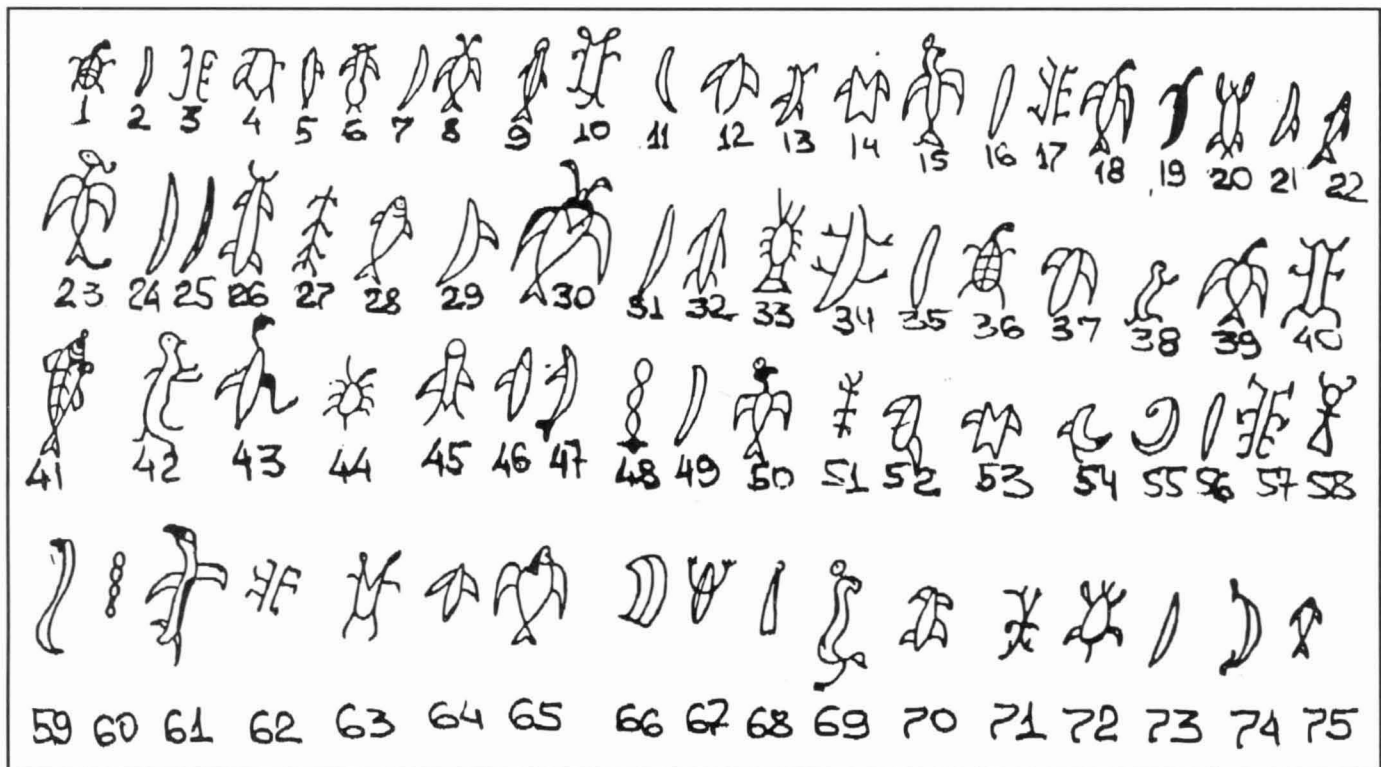


Figure 1. The 75 glyphs found in Tomenika's text.

Hanga Roa, is unpublished and probably still in her archive.

Before Christianity, the islanders were known to have two ways of writing aside from the classic texts on wooden tablets: *kohau tau* or *tau* (with a brief note of years and events) and *kohau mama* (for remission of tapu) (Barthel 1971). Routledge erroneously ranks this text among *tau* texts, or

75 signs (following one to another, with an interval); some are in ligatures, usual for texts on wood tablets. Unlike tablets, written in boustrophedon, this text is written as a manuscript, from left to right, one line following another, and beginning from the high left corner of the paper. It confirms that Tomenika knew the European style of writing as well as

hieroglyphic text. Crooked lines of signs were due to the unusual material (paper) and the 'instrument' (a pen) which appears to have been trembling in the weak hand of the old man. One assumes the incompleteness of the signs was due to the old man's disease.

The thought that Tomenika's text might be an imitation was cast aside after the first sight of the writing, years ago.

But the study of it was postponed in order to obtain serious results in translations of the classic *kohau rongorongo* texts.

Tomenika's text reproduces—as do all other *kohau rongorongo* texts translated by the author—songs performed during productive magic rites. By its character, this text is a masterpiece of hieroglyphic script, the signs of which represent phonemes, morphemes or syllables.

Table 1. Interpretation of Glyphs. Under each glyph is included the interpretation number from Table 2, the *rapanui* name and the glyph interpretation.

Glyph cluster from Figure 1.	1st glyph	2nd glyph	3d glyph	4th glyph	5th glyph
1	280 honu honui (important old man, a noble)				
2-6	001 kai [he]cut [a sugar cane]	003 kihi kihi, [taro]	070 vai vai,	700/073 ika/uhi a plant?/yam?	290 hotu a chief,
7-10	001 kai [he] cut [a sweet potato]	651 moe moe,	700 puku/puka [yam] puka,	209/309 rua [yam] rua,	
11-15	040 kau a root [of taro]	070 vai vai, [a plant]	034? *** poro *** poporo,	400 + turi [a sugar cane] turi,	021 pu a bunch;
16-18	001 kai [he] cut [a sugar cane]	003/030 kihi kihi, [yam]	600/400 taha/turi taha/[a sugar cane]	turi,	
19-22	470/447 moe [a sweet potato] moe,	070? vai [taro] vai,	041 kau a root [of the]	700 ika plant?	
23-27	600 taha [yam] taha,	041 kau a root,	041 kau a root [of taro] vai,	070 +042? kau a root [of sugar cane]	003 kihi kihi
28-30	700 ika a plant?,	041/070? kau/vai a root/[a taro] vai,	651 moe [sweet potato] moe		
31-34	001 kai [he] cut,	022 uhi yam	043 + 074 kau uhi a root [of] yam	760 moko moko	

35-37	001	280	070		
	kai	honu	vai		
	[he] cut,	honui (a noble)	[taro] vai		
38-41	380	400	030	700	
		turi	kihi	ika	
	[a sugar cane]	turi [and]	kihi,	a plant?	
42-45	380	400	074	***?	
		turi	uhi	***?	
	[a sugar cane]	turi,	yam	***?	
46-48	700/070	700	002		
	ika/vai	ika	rapa		
	a plant?/[taro] vai,	a plant,	[taro] rapa		
49-53	001	400	003	070	209/309
	kai	turi	kihi	vai	rua
	[he] cut [a sugar cane]	turi	[and] kihi,	[taro] vai,	[yam] rua
54-55	040	041/143			
	kau	kau			
	a root,	a root(a tuber,a tuber)			
56-60	001	003	591	078	002
	kai	kihi	ko=rangi	huri	rapa
	[he] cut [sugar cane]	kihi	[and] rangi,	shoots [of taro]	rapa
61-64	650/657	003	209/309	070	
	taha	kihi	rua	vai	
	[yam] taha,	[sugar cane] kihi,	[yam] rua,	[taro] vai,	
65-67	600	015	760		
	taha	tea	moko		
	[yam] taha,	[taro] tea <tea>,	[yam] moko		
68-72	004	380+021	070	003/030	070?
	ko	pu	vai	kihi	nai
	[he] dig	a bunch	[of taro] vai,	[a sugar cane] kihi,	[of taro] vai
73-75	001	007	700		
	kai	rei	ika		
	[he] cut,	[he] take out	a plant?		

It is a pity that the author cannot here provide proof of the reading of the signs and translations—all of which were published in her book *Kohau rongorongo tablets in Kunstammer* where there is not only a full reading and translation of the two St. Petersburg tablets, but also the principles of deciphering and a catalogue of translated signs.

Tomenika's text translation testifies that it is not equal to the song "*He Timo, te akoako*" which is also ascribed to Tomenika, as postulated by R. Campbell. □

Table 2. Interpretation List

- 001: part of cultivated land; *kai*= to eat, to cut
- 002: ceremonial paddle; *rapa*=green, a kind of taro
- 003: moss or creeping plant; *kihi*=a kind of sugar cane
- 004: stick, a pillar; *ko*=to dig, to loosen
- 007: *rei miro* (ceremonial pectoral); *rei*=to pull with net, to draw, haul, drag
- 015 (005): a plant cutting; *tea*=white, a kind of taro, yam
- 021: round hole; *pu*=a bundle
- 022¹: tuber with roots; *uhi*=yam
- 034: plant with berries; *poro*=*colanum nigrum*, *poporo*
- 040 (041,042,043): canoe; *kau*=a root, tuber
- 070: reservoir with water; *vai*=water, a kind of taro
- 073, 074¹=022¹
- 078: shoot, sucker for planting; *huri*=a shoot

- rua*=both, a kind of yam
- 280: turtle; *honu*=turtle, noble
- 290: man, person; *hotu*?=chief
- 380: sign without reading, introduces next sign
- 400: bird with small beak; *turi*=variety of sugar cane
- 470=447: sleeping bird; *moe*=kind of sweet potato
- 591: pillar of sky (cf. 009); *rangi*=kind of sugar cane
- 600 (650, 657): bird with big beak; *taha*=a kind of yam
- 700: fish; *ika*=plant, a kind of sugar cane
- 760: lizard; *moko*=a kind of yam
- (1) see Routledge 1919

References

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Drawings of moai from a poster created by César Aguilera. This elegant poster is available on Easter Island at Hotu Matua's Favorite Shoppe on Policarpo Toro Street, and is a companion to another poster also created by Aguilera that depicts wood carvings. Next year, we are told, a third poster will join this series—one showing petroglyph designs from the island.